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ABSTRACT

This primary, exploratory study combines the limited literature on arts magnet schools with the writings of arts activists and the narratives of several arts magnet school administrators in an attempt to understand arts magnet schools better. The paper illuminates some of the strengths of arts magnet schools as well as some of the limitations and challenges facing administrators, parents, and students of arts magnet schools. The paper provides a brief history of magnet schools; discusses visual and performing arts magnet schools; and presents a review of the magnet school literature. The paper points out the importance of remembering that each arts magnet setting, whether elementary, middle, or high school, has unique strengths and challenges related to its students, teachers, families, facilities, curriculum, and communities. (Contains 39 references.) (BT)

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Running Head: ARTS MAGNET

Red, Yellow, Blue:

A Primary Study of the Strengths, Limitations and Challenges of Arts Magnet Schools

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Don Halquist

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This primary, exploratory study combines the limited literature on arts magnet schools with the writings of arts activists and the narratives of several arts magnet school administrators in an attempt to better understand arts magnet schools. Specifically, this paper illuminates some of the strengths of arts magnet schools as well as some of the limitations and challenges facing administrators, parents and students of arts magnet schools.

A Brief History of Magnet Schools

Magnet schools were developed in large urban centers in the 1970s primarily as an aid in preventing, eliminating or reducing racial isolation in elementary and secondary schools. Rooted in court orders tying school desegregation to voluntary special enrichment programs, magnet schools were designed to overcome the effects of past discrimination (Cichowski, 1998). Donald R. Waldrip, executive director of Magnet Schools of America, a Texas-based advocacy group, states "The courts discovered that by using a carrot instead of a stick, more desegregation could take place, and at the same time, the quality of education would improve" (2000, p. 1). According to Morton Inger (1991), "The idea was to create schools so good that they would draw a racial cross-section of students out of the segregated neighborhood boundaries, avoiding the political opposition engendered by mandatory busing" (p. 1).

In the late 1980s, magnet schools became "part of a strategy for improving technical proficiency in the workplace when Pacific Rim students began testing much higher than American students in mathematics and science" (Cichowski, 1998, p. 4).

In the 1990s, magnet programs fostering career development emerged as the federal government began linking education to the workplace through such programs as school-to-work, career academies, and work-force investment systems (Cichowski, 1998). "By the mid-1990s, 1.2 million students in 230 districts nationwide were enrolled in magnet schools" (Viadero, 1999, p. 1).

Steele and Levine (1994) define magnet schools as schools that provide a distinctive curriculum or instructional approach, draw students from beyond an assigned attendance zone, and make desegregation an explicit purpose. Today, students can attend magnet schools

programs covering a wide variety of themes from Montessori to International Studies to the visual and performing arts.

Like other schools, magnet schools must meet city and state requirements in areas of the curriculum, student body diversity, and in the selection, hiring and retention of teachers. And like other schools, magnet schools are subject to state and local budget allocations and the priorities established for those allocations.

The Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), established in 1972, provides federal financial assistance to plan, establish, and operate schools that offer a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial numbers of students of different racial backgrounds. Between 1985 and 1993, the MSAP spent $739 million in school districts to promote magnet schools (as cited in Magnet Schools, 2000, p. 1). Grants to school districts are authorized to eliminate, reduce, or prevent minority group isolation in elementary and secondary schools and to strengthen academic and vocational education skills in students attending magnet schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

Several appealing characteristics of magnets schools include (1) a specialized core curriculum or specialized pedagogy, (2) the school's focus on an occupation or a field of study gives students a sense of direction and lets them justify to themselves, their parents, and their peers the effort they put into schoolwork, (3) a sense of shared enterprise and a committed, enthusiastic faculty and student body, (4) a strong commitment to parent involvement, (5) a committed, charismatic principal, and (6) an association with reform measures such as a contextual teaching, cooperative learning, teacher collegiality and an absence of tracking (Inger, 1991). At most magnet schools, the faculty are relatively free to solve their own problems in their own way, without needing the approval from the school district (Inger, 1991).

As the name implies, magnet schools "attract" students based on their specific interests. The name was first used by a visual and performing arts school in Houston when it began describing itself as a "magnet" for attracting students.

Visual and Performing Arts Magnet Schools

Typically, visual and performing arts magnet elementary schools are designed to develop the interests and talents of students in the arts while enhancing the academic disciplines through an interdisciplinary approach that stresses creativity and artistic expression. Classroom teachers, arts specialists, and artists-in-residence provide students with learning experiences enriched through music, dance, the visual arts, creative writing and drama.

Visual and performing arts magnet middle and high schools are designed for the artistically talented. Students participate and, eventually, major in visual arts (painting, sculpture, graphic arts, architecture); dance (modern, tap, jazz, ballet); music (instrumental and vocal); theatre (performing, technical, management, criticism); or television/radio production (performance and technical). Students study with professional artists, dancers, musicians, directors, and radio/television personalities. The program provides a strong academic background in all core subjects and is designed to prepare students for further professional study and career options in the arts.

In a 1988-89 magnet schools brochure, The San Diego School District characterized the creative and performing arts magnet at O'Farrell High School as a setting that:

> Features specialized professional instruction in dance, drama, music, (vocal/instrumental/electronic), visual art, television production, and technical theatre.
>
> Offers Gifted and Advanced Placement Programs, emphasizing a strong program of basic skills instruction.
>
> Produces an extensive calendar of art events including plays, musicals, and departmental concerts.
>
> Provides extended day for students.
>
> (as cited in Rossell, p. 112)

Currently, there are between 300 and 400 arts magnet schools in existence nation-wide (Hanna, 1999). Admission procedures vary with the arts magnet school; some admit students by audition/portfolio process, others by audition/portfolio and interview, others by review of academic records and interest, while others by random assignment through lottery (Biddix, Carter, Daniel, Mitchell and Thompson, 1993).

The Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts, a K-5 elementary arts magnet in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is mandated by federal court order to maintain a 50-50% balance between African American and non-African American (including all ethnic groups) students. In addition to requiring that each student have a definite interest in the arts, the school's admission criteria also involves an audition, a teacher or principal recommendation, and a video or portfolio of the student's experience (Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts, 2001).

Typically, arts magnet schools are located in cities with populations of 500,000-1,000,000 people. However, a significant number of schools with healthy enrollment are found in smaller districts. Many school sites are a direct results of inner-city redevelopment plans (Biddix, Carter, Daniel, Mitchell and Thompson, 1993).

A Review of the Magnet School Literature

Throughout the last fifteen years, literature focusing on the educational achievements of magnet schools has grown (Blank, 1989; Blank & Archbald, 1992; Dentler, 1990; Hill, Foster, & Gendler, 1990; Klauke, 1988; Steele and Levine, 1994; Viadero, 1999). Literature addressing other aspects of magnet programs also continues to grow. For example, Bryant (1987) and Price (1988) identified and discussed components of successful magnet programs. Bailey (1987) and Laws (1987) examined the need for research assessing the performance of magnet schools. Hendrie (1996) and Scott & De Luna (1994) have contributed studies on magnet schools' value in desegregation of schools.

Metz (1986) used case studies to show that some magnet schools generate cohesive communities where students and teachers share and work toward a common purpose. Additional case studies (Bracey, 1998; Glenn, 1998) have addressed questions of equity, access, and school choice.

Duax (1992) and Rossell (1990) used case study methodology to examine issues of attrition, curriculum and interracial contact in one or two magnet schools while Heebner (1995) collected data from 5,000 students, interviewed 70 students and 62 staff, and surveyed administrators in over 100 career magnet programs to examine the impact of career magnet

high schools. Her report found that students admitted to magnet programs had better math scores and more confidence in career skills than students who attended comprehensive high schools.

Gamoran (1996) used data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey, which began by surveying over 24,000 students in eighth grade in 1988 (base year) and followed up with another survey in 1990 (first follow-up), to compare students in magnet schools with those in Catholic schools, nonreligious private schools, and public comprehensive schools. He found some advantages for magnet school students in achievement in the areas of reading and history. Gamoran acknowledged a limitation of his study was that it "fails to address diversity within the category of magnet schools" (p. 14). This is due, in part, to the fact that there were too few magnet schools of any given type represented in the national data.

Most recently, Smrekar and Goldring (1999) examined magnet and nonmagnet elementary schools in Cincinnati and St. Louis over a period of three years and found that while magnet schools may help alleviate racial desegregation, they have also contributed to segregation along class lines.

An Exploratory Study

Examination of the large body of literature on magnet schools reveals limited research specifically addressing arts magnet schools. In order to enhance the existing limited research on arts magnet schools, I conducted an exploratory interview study designed to illuminate some of the strengths, challenges and limitations found in these schools settings. Using a series of open-ended interview questions, I conducted telephone interviews with principals of arts magnet elementary schools in St. Louis, Missouri, Newburgh, New York and Charleston, South Carolina. The same questions were e-mailed to a number of principals of elementary, middle and high schools in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota and Tennessee with a return rate of 30% (4 of 12).

Themes from the analysis of the interview and questionnaire data were combined with findings from previous studies specific to arts magnet schools (Brock, 1991; Connor, 1987;

Newbill, 1992) and the writings of arts activists (Fowler, 1996; Hanna, 1999). What follows are some of the strengths found in several arts magnet settings.

Some Strengths of Arts Magnet Schools

School Enrollment

Arts magnet schools are having a positive effect in reducing enrollment decline in their school districts. Connor (1987) evaluated the fine arts magnet programs of two elementary and two middle/junior high schools in Florida's Dade County. Data reviewed and analyzed included school records and surveys administered to students, teachers and parents. Among the findings: the program improved black/non-black composition of the elementary population and an increased enrollment in three of the four schools evaluated.

A summative evaluation of four elementary magnet schools in Kansas City (Brock, 1991) assessed the progress made during three years of implementing a visual and performing arts theme. Focal areas considered in the evaluation were enrollment, implementation, perceptions and achievement. Data was collected through school visits, classroom observations, perceptual questionnaires administered to teachers, students and parents, interviews with the school principals and administrators, and achievement records. Findings indicated that all schools had a larger student body than before implementation of the visual and performing arts theme and that enrollment at each school operated above 90% enrollment capacity during the 1990-1991 school year.

Academic Achievement

In her book, Partnering Dance and Education, educator, researcher and arts activist, Judith Lynn Hanna (1999) presents compelling arguments for making the arts central to every student's education. Among her claims: higher test scores for students involved in the arts.

In fact, the standardized test results of students who attend arts magnet schools, as with other magnet programs that combine academic and career goals, seem to indicate that arts magnet schools foster academic progress. For example, The Davidson Arts Magnet School in

Augusta, Georgia, a school composed of 500 students in grades 5 to 12, 50% African American and 50% Caucasian, has received the highest test scores in the country, including those of the private schools, for the past eight years. "Even with more than 60% of its students classified as at-risk, daily instruction in the arts has created a productive classroom learning environment with significant improvements in academic performance" (Fowler, 1996, pp. 97-98).

Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary School in Charleston, South Carolina, is a public arts magnet school for grades K-5. The school serves a lower middle-income, blue-collar neighborhood with a student body that is about 60% Caucasian and 40% African American (Hanna, 1999). Students are admitted on a first-come, first-served basis. The current waiting list holds over 1,000 names. Students at Ashley River receive two, 40-minute periods of visual art, creative music and dance, Spanish, computer lab and drama a week. Suzuki Strings, Pied Pipers (a percussion and recorder ensemble), Chorus, Art Guild and classes in jazz and ballet are also provided. "Classroom teachers work in teams to plan interdisciplinary thematic units" (J. Ellicott, personal communication, December 2000). In just five years, Ashley River became the second highest academically ranked school in the Charleston public school system. Test scores in the sciences, language arts, math, and social studies were consistently 10 to 20 points above local and state averages (Wilson, Corbett, Adkins & Noblit, 1996).

A three-year summative evaluation of Kansas City's Paseo Fine and Performing Arts Magnet High School (Newbill, 1992) indicated that the school had achieved considerable success in implementing the fine and performing arts magnet theme. Program implementation was evaluated from data collected through school visits, classroom observations, perceptual questionnaires administered to teachers, students and parents, interviews with the school principal and administrators, and achievement data. The findings indicated that all Paseo Academy students scored above yearly district averages on the Tests of Achievement Proficiency in all areas except 11th grade mathematics.

The School for Creative and Performing Arts, a public arts magnet school in Cincinnati, Ohio, for students in grades 4-12, blends academics with the arts to help students realize their potential both artistically and academically. In the 1989-1990 school year, the student body

was 52.6% Caucasian, 46.7% African American, 0.4% Hispanic, 0.3% Asian American; 24% received free or reduced lunch. The average daily attendance was 92.9% (Hanna, 1999).

> At the elementary level, the school ranked first in the school district in all three areas of the California Achievement Test. At the secondary level, only one school ranked higher. The American College Testing program scores increased steadily over 5 years from 18.9 in the year 1985-1986 to 21.9 in 1989-1990. In 1995-1996, the statistics were similar. (as cited in Hanna, 1999, p. 39)

Elm Creative Arts Elementary School, a K-5 arts magnet school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin was created in 1977 in the wake of court-ordered desegregation. In the 1990-1991 school year, the student body was 59.2% African American, 36.9% Caucasian, 2.6% Hispanic, 0.3% Asian American and 1.0% Other (Biddix, Carter, Daniel, Mitchell, & Thompson, 1993). Elm Creative Arts Elementary School follows the curriculum guidelines issued for all Milwaukee Public Elementary Schools. There is basic instruction in reading, mathematics, English, science and social studies, as well as in the arts—art, drama, music, dance, physical education and creative writing. Each of the arts is treated as an area of learning with a role that is as important and equal to the other subjects in the curriculum (Biddix, Carter, Daniel, Mitchell, & Thompson, 1993). While time spent in other classes was reduced to make equal time for arts instruction, student performance on the Iowa Basic Skills improved (Peterson & Howe, 1997).

The success of Elm Creative Elementary Arts School provoked the creation of another elementary level arts magnet and then arts-based middle and high schools. Josephine Koebert, principal of Roosevelt Middle School explained, "I threw out the remedial courses, put in the arts classes, and we went from the worst middle school academically to one of the best in a single year" (as cited in Peterson & Howe, 1997, p. 11). The percentage of students achieving competency in math increased from 10% to 60% and in reading from 30% to 80%. The attendance rate went up to 92% (Peterson & Howe, 1997).

At the Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., "students graduate at an astonishing 99% rate, and 90% go on to higher education" (Fowler, 1996, p. 138).

Student Behavior and Parent Participation

In addition to gains in academic performance and attendance, students' behavior and parents' participation improve in arts magnet settings. For example, a year after adopting the Ashley River model, Sunset Park Elementary School in Wilmington, North Carolina, saw student suspensions drop from 70 to 3, disciplinary actions fall from 130 to 50, and PTA attendance rise from an average of 100 to over 400 parents per meeting (Hanna, 1999).

A year after adopting the arts-based model, Milwaukee's Roosevelt Middle School's suspension rate dropped from 50% to lower than 10% (Peterson & Howe, 1997). At Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Elementary Magnet School in Kansas City, Missouri, the top priority is on building trust between the school and parents, many of whom live in poverty. Administrators recognize that family problems can be overwhelming at times—for both the individual family members and the school staff who work with them. In order to meet this challenge, Wendell Phillips used Title I funds to hire a full-time parent-community liaison to help organize all school-family events, allowing the teachers and principal to devote more time to meeting with parents to discuss student learning and spend less time making logistical and administrative arrangements. (Wendell Phillips, 1997)

Wendell Phillips actively involves parents in the planning, implementation and review of the school-wide program sometimes meeting on Saturday or Sunday to accommodate the most parents. The result is "increased parent involvement in both academically oriented events and those involving parents in school decision-making" (Wendell Phillips, 1997, p. 5).

Positive Attitudes Toward Education

> *The beauty of the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics is that when you have an idea, the time, teachers, and resources are available to help you pursue that idea. It gives you the means to practice the craft that you're learning--whether it's theatre, dance, music, whatever--and to come up with something that's really all yours, that you invented.*
>
> Eric Nordstrom, alumni

One study (as cited in U. S. Department of Education, 1991) stated that students who attend magnet schools for at least a three-year period have an increase in self-esteem and in overall school satisfaction. This appears to be the case with arts magnet schools as well. For example, Connor's (1987) evaluation of the fine arts magnet programs of two elementary and two middle/junior high schools in Florida's Dade County reported that parents, teachers, and students were generally satisfied with the program.

Brock's (1991) evaluation of the four visual and performing arts elementary magnet schools indicated that 75% of the students seemed to enjoy the arts theme, and the program seemed to have a positive effect on the majority of students enrolled. A random sample of 25% of the parents of students from each of the four elementary arts magnets seemed to feel positive about the programs and parent satisfaction increased from 86% the first year of implementation to 92% the third year.

At Paseo Fine and Performing Arts Magnet High School, 89% of the students and 90% of the parents expressed satisfaction with the arts theme, which was cited as the reason for enrollment in the school (Newbill, 1992).

Community Partnerships

Natale (1992) profiled successful arts magnet schools in New Orleans, Prince George's County, Maryland and Denver and proposed several guidelines for school board members desiring to open schools of the arts. One of her recommendations: arts magnet schools should "develop partnerships with local arts organizations, businesses and foundations" (p. 48).

Horizons-on-the-Hudson, a visual and performing arts magnet elementary school located sixty miles north of New York City, has done just that. The school has had a long and fruitful working relationship with the Metropolitan Opera Company. Each year, artists from the Opera Company collaborate with fifth and sixth grade students to produce an original opera. "The students are involved in all aspects of the production from writing the opera's script to designing the sets" (P. Sandler, personal communication, December 2000).

Barger Academy of Fine Arts, a K-5 fine arts magnet in Chattanooga, Tennessee is founded on the belief that the school must have community involvement to be successful. According to Principal Rodney Thompson, "Partnerships have been developed with area churches, business and local artists. Our sculpture garden is a result of the artist-in-residence program where students have opportunities to work with many talented artists from the community" (R. Thompson, personal communication, March 2001).

Some Challenges and Limitations Facing Arts Magnet Schools

Combining the limited research findings specific to arts magnet schools (Brock, 1991; Natale, 1992; Newbill, 1992; Sherman, 1999) with the themes that emerged from the interviews of arts magnet school administrators reveals some of the challenges or limitations found in several arts magnet settings.

Funding

"We are strapped for money. However, obstacles are not obstacles, we find ways to support our programs," says Jayne Ellicott, principal of Ashley River. (J. Ellicott, personal communication, December 2000). And to that end, Ellicott and her faculty have found creative ways to fund and support the school's diverse programs. This year, for example:

> the Parent Teacher Association is funding the ballet teacher's salary. Title 1 monies are being used to support the technology coordinator's salary. Monies from the daily lunchtime ice cream sales pay for anything from textbooks to conference fees for teachers. (J. Ellicott, personal communication, December 2000)

Schools devoted to the arts are not inexpensive to run. According to Florence Johnson, principal of The San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts, which enrolls 1,450 students, the 1991-92 operating budget was about $5 million, including salaries (as cited in Natale, 1992). Costs of arts magnet schools differ from city to city but in most cases, they get the same per-pupil funding as any other school. And like most schools, arts magnet schools pay their bills using money from a variety of sources, such as district-provided funds, grant money and fundraising dollars.

Some arts magnet schools receive additional funding through the efforts of non-profit organizations. For example, in Cincinnati, The Friends of The School for Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA) has been the financial backbone of the school since its inception. The excellence of SCPA's special arts programs is dependent upon private/corporate contributions as the school receives no more funding than any other school in the Cincinnati Public School District. Funds raised by The Friends of SCPA defray production expenses, fund private lesson scholarships, finance additional artistic faculty, provide needed equipment and cover other artistic demands that make the SCPA education unique (The School for Creative and Performing Arts, 2001).

Some art educators argue that arts magnet schools drain the talent from all other schools and concentrate arts resources on relatively few students. In his book, Strong Arts, Strong Schools, Fowler (1996) proposes that if a magnet school "forces a compromise in the arts programs of other high schools or monopolizes resources, its fairness can be questioned" (p. 97). He argues that magnet schools of the arts "should not be an excuse for a depleted arts program in other schools, just as a science magnet should not take way the science curriculum from all other students" (p. 97). Fowler believes that magnet schools for the arts have "an obligation to share with the larger school system beyond, to all the students, and to the community" (p. 97).

Trade-Offs

The Vancouver School District in Washington State is very committed to the arts, however, budget realities still shape programming. For Deborah Brzoska, artistic director of

the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, this means making trade-offs. One trade-off: no sports, dance replaces physical education. "You put your money into what really counts--the teachers and the artists. You get the people in place, and the other stuff just kind of comes" says Brzoska (as cited in Sherman, 1999, p. 2).

Dance has also replaced physical education at the Denver School of the Arts, an arts magnet school for students in grades 6-12. Principal Patricia Bippus acknowledges that this trade-off impacts enrollment.

> Some students miss the comprehensive school environment--especially sports. Our kids can participate in sports at their home school or at a nearby high school and some do. We loose some good kids to regular high schools for sports and for 'more guys' – we have a 2-1 ratio of girls to boys.
> (P. Bippus, personal communication, March 2001)

Teacher Commitment

Rodney Thompson, principal of Barger Academy of Fine Arts, believes the key to successful program begins with hiring teachers who are committed to an arts enriched curriculum; are not afraid to work long hours; and believe in professional development. According to Thompson:

> We are one of seven magnet schools in the Hamilton County School District that receives funding through the Magnet School Assistant Program. This has helped us do a tremendous amount of staff development – Discipline-Based Arts Education, Socratic seminar and academic coaching, curriculum mapping and alignment, Talent's Unlimited, multiple intelligences, team building, cooperative learning, authentic assessments and theme development. We want to continue to be out front and breaking the mold of regular schools and the regular way things are done. We work

> more than most teachers do and I told them up front
> that is how it would be before I ever hired them.
> (R. Thompson, personal communication, March 2001)

Patricia Bippus, principal of Denver School of the Arts, believes that it is important to find teachers who can accommodate different learning styles and abilities.

> We have an unusually high population of students who qualify
> as 'gifted' on giftedness measures. This is a plus as well as a minus.
> It is a challenge for some teachers to meet the diverse needs of
> students in non-traditional ways and who are firm yet flexible.
> (P. Bippus, personal communication, March 2001)

Teacher Satisfaction

There is "some evidence" (as cited in U. S. Department of Education, 1991, p. 18) that magnet schools can be a means for renewing teacher interests and motivation through establishment of a common academic goal and interdisciplinary curriculum planning. There is also "evidence of greater job satisfaction on the part of magnet school teachers" (U. S. Department of Education, 1991, p. 19).

This, however, was not the case for teachers at four visual and performing arts elementary schools in Kansas City (Brock, 1991). The questionnaire responses of teachers revealed a decline in satisfaction with school climate throughout the three years of implementation. Specifically, teachers' satisfaction with the level of cooperation between arts and regular teachers dropped from 80% the first year to 69% the third year. Teachers' satisfaction with the level of cooperation between teachers and school leadership fell from 81% the first year to 63% the third year. Teachers at one school characterized the administration as "dictatorial, uncooperative, rigid and uncommunicative. Forty-eight percent characterized building level support for implementation of the visual and performing art theme as non-existent or inhibitory" (p. 24). In addition, teachers at two schools indicated that lack of supplies and materials impacted their abilities to effectively teach the theme.

Seventy-five percent of the teachers at Paseo Fine and Performing Arts Magnet High School expressed dissatisfaction with school organization, atmosphere and communication among staff (Newbill, 1992).

Time

For Patricia Sandler, principal of Horizons-on-the-Hudson, the challenge lies in finding time for teacher training. "Each year we have less and less time to train new teachers and less time for teachers to plan and develop new interdisciplinary units" (P. Sandler, personal communication, December 2000).

Students at Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary engage in 80 minutes of pullout art activities per week. According to Principal Jayne Ellicott, "This, at times, creates a challenge for the regular classroom teacher as it leaves a limited amount of time for other subjects." But she adds, "There is such a team spirit and a belief in the program that teachers work together to solve any problems" (J. Ellicott, personal communication, December 2000).

Scheduling

Some arts magnet high schools use a double block schedule (4 periods per day) which allows students to use a double block in their arts area every day with other classes meeting on alternate days. Some arts magnet schools schedule a seven to nine period day which allows most students to schedule three arts classes a day.

Paseo Fine and Performing Arts Magnet High School uses an eight period day. Responses to a questionnaire indicated that two-thirds of the students were dissatisfied with the eight period school day while the majority of teachers favored the schedule (Newbill, 1992). In addition, the findings indicated that "nearly a third of the students did not like classes overall and 55% of students stated that the school was not academically challenging" (p. 9). Newbill (1992), in her recommendations to the school, suggested that "efforts to make the eight period day more appealing to students may improve their attitude about school" (p. 9).

Additional Recommendations of Summative Evaluations

Both Brock's (1991) three-year evaluation of four visual and performing arts magnet elementary schools and Newbill's (1992) three-year summative evaluation of the Paseo Fine and Performing Arts Magnet High School recommended that schools place a greater emphasis upon academics. Brock (1991) suggested that schools "explore methods to improve student achievement, especially in grades three through five" (p. 48). Her findings indicated that the "standardized test scores drop considerably after kindergarten and continue the trend into fifth grade; and that traditional elementary school students outperformed arts magnet students from the third grade to the fifth" (p. 48). Findings also indicated that "parents expressed a desire for greater emphasis in basic skills both in school and in the extended day" (p. 48). Newbill's (1992) findings indicated that throughout the years of implementation, students, teachers and parents consistently expressed a desire for greater emphasis upon academics. Her recommendation: "improve the academic programs" (p. 9).

In addition to recommending a greater emphasis on academics, both studies (Brock, 1991; Newbill, 1992) suggested that schools address the principle areas of teacher dissatisfaction which included school organization, staff relations and communications among staff and school leadership.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on a limited number of elementary, middle and high school arts magnet schools and does not attempt to generalize to the larger population of arts magnet schools. The limited research on arts magnet schools combined with the writings of arts activists and the narratives of school administrators reveals that some arts magnet settings foster: increased school enrollment; higher academic achievement; consistent attendance; improved student behavior; increased parent participation; positive attitudes toward education; and strong community partnerships. The limited research and data also reveals that some arts magnet schools face challenges regarding: funding as it relates to issues of programs, training, supplies and materials; teacher commitment and satisfaction; time; and scheduling. While this exploratory study reveals some common strengths, limitations and

challenges found in several arts magnet schools, it is perhaps most important to remember that each arts magnet setting, whether elementary, middle or high school, has unique strengths and challenges related to its students, teachers, families, facilities, curriculum and communities.

As stated earlier, the research on arts magnet schools is thin. Clearly, more research is needed. The Vancouver School of Arts and Academics is one of five schools in the United States participating in a prestigious five-year grant (access to two professional mentors and $25,000 a year to develop interdisciplinary arts projects) from the College Board and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. In return, the school will provide data for a longitudinal study of the impact of arts training on academic achievement (Sherman, 1999). This report will significantly add to the growing body of research surrounding the standardize test results of students who participate in the arts. More studies of this scope will help paint a richer, more colorful and detailed picture of the arts magnet schools in this country.

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